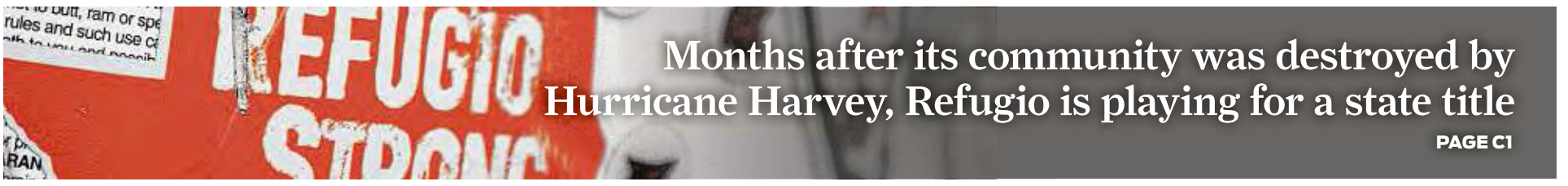

Months after its community was destroyed by Hurricane Harvey, Refugio is playing for a state title

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HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Wednesday, December 20, 2017 | *HoustonChronicle.com and Chron.com* | *Vol. 117, No. 68* | *$2.00* ★★★* | *Sunny: High 77, Low 53*

NATION

Train crash engineer possibly distracted

Investigators are looking into whether the Amtrak engineer whose speeding train plunged off a Washington state overpass, killing at least three, was distracted by an employee-in-training. **Page A10**

New York Times

Wrecked Amtrak cars are removed from the crash site.

Democrat wins Va. House seat by just one vote

A single vote may spell the end of Republican control in Virginia's House of Delegates. **Page A6**

CITY | STATE

Woman pleads guilty as shooter on Snapchat

A Houston woman pleads guilty to shooting a gun from a moving vehicle captured in a now-viral Snapchat video. **Page A4**

BUSINESS

Construction firms desperate for workers

Local training programs are getting hounded by construction firms desperate for workers as Houston rebuilds after Hurricane Harvey, which dumped more than 50 inches of rain and damaged an estimated 150,000 homes. **Page B1**

Republicans near victory on tax plan

Brendan Smialowski / AFP /Getty Images

Speaker Paul Ryan congratulates House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Rep. Kevin Brady, R-The Woodlands, after the House passed tax reform legislation that Brady spearheaded.

CONGRESS: House, Senate vote along party lines to pass $1.5 trillion measure

By Thomas Kaplan and Alan Rappeport
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — Republicans took a critical step toward notching their first significant legislative victory since assuming full political control, as the House and Senate voted along party lines Tuesday and into early Wednesday to pass the most sweeping rewrite of the tax code in decades.

The $1.5 trillion tax bill, which is expected to head to President Donald Trump's desk in the coming days, will have broad effects on the economy, making deep and lasting cuts to corporate taxes as well as temporarily lowering individual taxes.

The endeavor was not without hiccups, however, as three small provisions in the final tax bill agreed to by the House and Senate were found by the Senate parliamentarian to violate the budget rules that Republicans must follow to pass their bill through a process that shields it from a Democratic filibuster. As a result, the bill changed slightly in the Senate, and the House will need to vote on it again since both chambers must approve identical

Tax continues on A12

By the numbers

21%
The corporate tax rate would be permanently cut from 35 percent.

37%
The top rate for individuals would drop from 39.6% until 2025.

$22 million
The size of inheritances shielded from estate taxation would double for married couples.

HOME-SCHOOL: Cruz's tax break hits snag in Senate

By Kevin Diaz

WASHINGTON — In an abrupt move to keep the GOP tax bill on track, the Senate on Tuesday was poised to strip part of a tax break proposed by Texas Republican Ted Cruz that had been touted as a "game changer" for families who home-school their children.

Cruz's "Student Opportunity Amendment," decried by a top Democratic foe as "a backdoor assault on the public K-12 education system," fell victim to a budget rule protecting the tax legislation from a Democratic filibuster.

But only in part.

That was the part of Cruz's measure allowing families to use tax-advantaged 529 accounts for home-schooling expenses, which

Home-school continues on A12

» *A rundown of what provisions are in the final Republican tax bill.* **Page A13**

Harvey funds to cover flood control

Projects included in latest round of proposed aid

By Mike Ward

AUSTIN — A proposed $81 billion disaster aid package that the U.S. House is moving forward to approve will fund all federally-authorized flood control projects in Harris County and other Texas areas hammered by Hurricane Harvey, state and federal officials confirmed Tuesday.

And while the measure falls short of what Texas sought to address in the next phase of its disaster-recovery needs, the officials said they plan to push ahead for additional money next year.

"This bill fully funds all federally authorized flood control projects in Harris County and in all other Texas disaster area counties," said U.S. Rep. John Culberson, a Houston Republican who is a member of the House Appropriations Committee that ham-

Texas continues on A8

County advances bayou projects

Designs will aim to boost capacity of Brays, Greens

By Mihir Zaveri

Harris County Commissioners Court voted unanimously Tuesday to move forward with designing the final $14 million stretch of a massive, decades-long project to widen and deepen Brays Bayou.

Since the late 1980s, the Harris County Flood Control District and the Army Corps of Engineers methodically have been working to increase the bayou's ability to handle floodwaters, through a combination of detention basins and widening and deepening of the channel, aimed at providing relief to oft-flooded neighborhoods like Meyerland and the Texas Medical Center.

On Tuesday, Commissioners Court voted in

Projects continues on A8

The force is with heart patient

22-year-old awaiting transplant gets much support, private viewing of 'Jedi'

By Robert Downen

The click-clacking artificial heart follows Lee Williams always.

It is there when he watches Netflix or grabs $1 beers with his friends on Mondays. And it is there when he plays Xbox, walks his dog or waits, as he now invariably does, for the phone call confirming an organ is ready for him.

Two years after he was diagnosed with a rare form of heart disease, the 22-year-old is used to the noisy, 20-pound backpack that keeps his heart pumping, some 120 beats every minute.

But not all people are so comfortable with the clamor. Last year, at a showing of "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," fellow moviegoers complained to theater management about the noise.

Some thought there was a problem with the projector. Others didn't realize the backpack was keeping him alive.

Williams simply left.

"It was just really, really quiet and uncomfortable," said his mother, Cheri Beli-

'Star Wars' continues on A8

Elizabeth Conley / Houston Chronicle

Lee Williams, 22, right, watches a private screening of "Star Wars" with his friend Aliah Montazeri on Tuesday.

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